

Editor's Note

It is often noted that good teaching is good teaching, that what we do best to help students because their first language isn't English, or because they have just come to this country, or because English isn't spoken in their homes, is simply the careful and reflective teaching that we would give to all our students. Everyone benefits from teachers who attend to individual needs, who honor and draw on, rather than penalize, individuals' cultural or linguistic backgrounds, their personal experiences, their own ways of knowing. It is the case, however, that some students, usually from the cultural "mainstream," will survive and succeed academically under almost any teaching structure, surviving not because of but in spite of their school experiences. And other students, often cultural and linguistic minorities, will not. As educators, our concerns and our energies must be especially channeled to those who may not succeed unless we are darned good at what we do. In its focus on writing and literacy among linguistic and cultural minority students in an English-speaking educational system, this issue of The Quarterly is devoted to these concerns.

We begin with an article by Alex Moore of the United Kingdom, who writes about a Bangladeshi boy's experiences as he negotiates not only the standards of written English but the values for English composition with a teacher who is trying, but failing, to help him succeed in the British schools. Beth Winningham writes about her teacher research project examining writing instruction across the curriculum for five ESL students; she shares her discovery of the successes as well as the failed attempts at instruction and learning in the content areas when English is not a student's first language. Jean Gandesbery discusses her experiences with linguistic and cultural minority students on the college level as they engage in writing oral history assignments. An annotated bibliography on multicultural and multilingual issues around writing and literacy includes contributions by researchers and teachers whose work encompasses these issues—Shirley Brice Heath, Ann Lippincott, Faye Peitzman, and Sandra R. Schechter.

In this Quarterly, too, we hear from National Writing Project sites around the country. Lee Ann Leeson reviews a book on non-sexist language in writing; John Reiff reviews a book on adult literacy programs.

Happy new year—and happy reading.

—M.S.